

CLAIMS

1. A context detecting apparatus including a housing shaped to allow the apparatus to be positioned in a plurality of orientations each corresponding to at least one particular context, means adapted to detect the orientation and communications means for communicating the orientation that thus context to a device.
2. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the housing is a cube, triangular pyramid or a regular or irregular solid.
3. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the detection means corresponds to one or more sensors adapted to sense the orientation of the apparatus.
4. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the orientation is transmitted to the device by means of a cable.
5. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein the orientation is communicated to the device by wireless means.
6. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein the apparatus is adapted so that it may be configured to identify one or more orientations with one or more corresponding contexts.
7. A context detecting apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6 in the form of a computer peripheral whereby each orientation of the peripheral corresponds to a specific user context when using a defined plurality of associated computers.
8. A device adapted to be responsive to a context detecting apparatus as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7.

9. A device as claimed in claim 8 in the form of a personal computer adapted to switch between different operating states in response to the orientation of the context detecting apparatus.
10. A device as claimed in claim 9 wherein the different operating states include the computer going into standby, being locked, filtering, storing, buffering, setting authorization states or otherwise manipulating incoming email and/or messages.
11. A device as claimed in claim 9 wherein the different operating states include the computer altering settings relating to colours, choice of software, and desktop layout.
12. A device as claimed in any one of claims 9 to 11 adapted to be configurable by the user to allow the definition of and switching between different operating states.
13. A device as claimed in any one of claims 8 to 12 adapted to control a second device such as a telephone, or speakers in response to context information received from the context detecting apparatus.
14. A context detection system including a peripheral device, adapted to output a signal corresponding to its orientation, and a computer adapted to change its operating state in response to the signal thereby allowing the control of the operating state of the computer by means of the orientation of the peripheral.
15. A method of detecting user context, the method comprising the steps of a user orienting a context detection sensing means in a physical orientation corresponding to a chosen context, a device interpreting the context as communicated to it by the context detection means and modifying its behaviour accordingly.

16. A device as claimed in claims 1-7 where the appearance of the faces can be customized via printed labels, or via the update of integrated displays incorporated into the device.